

manifestations of Catalanism provided new employment opportunities for cultural elites and a form of clientalism emerged promoted by CiU. *Convergència*, led by a leader with a clear conception of Catholic conservative politics, was able to undertake its own conception of 'national reconstruction' and the transformation of society. CiU applied the classical formulation of Gramscian hegemony in its cultural practice in the period post-1980. Pujolism in power between 1980 and 2003 represented the defeat of populist and progressive Catalanism and the careful construction of a new political practice. This enabled CiU to consolidate the identification of government and president with the restored institutions and as a by-product, it led to the continued questioning of the real autonomy of Catalan socialism. The transition in Catalonia, led throughout by the forces of the left, ended with the overall majority obtained by CiU in the second autonomous elections in 1984.

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## Nationalism and Autonomy, 1984–2011

Catalanism . . . has had a principal role in binding together Catalan society for more than 100 years . . . [Now however] historic Catalanism has obtained its main demands. Historic Catalanism has triumphed and historic Catalanism has now expired.<sup>1</sup>

For much of the twentieth century, Catalonia and Spain represented alternative visions of the peninsula. Madrid was the political and administrative capital of the Spanish state but had a rival in the city of Barcelona, which was Spain's cultural and industrial centre. For most of the modern era Spain has provided the market for Catalan products. Historically, Catalonia's bourgeoisie has been the economically strongest in all of Spain yet has also lacked proportionate political influence. Given its regional concentration, Catalanism can never be hegemonic in Spain, though it tried at various times of the century to achieve a leading role in the wider polity. Catalans have directly participated in all of the major issues that have confronted Spain in the modern era. It was from the city of Barcelona that projects emerged for both reform of the state and also for radical and revolutionary transformation. Whilst radical options declined in the post-Franco period, modernisation, democratisation and Europeanisation were consistently supported in Catalonia across the political class.

As Catalan autonomy became firmly embedded post-1980, the political movement of Catalanism demonstrated important differences with the movement that had existed in other phases of the twentieth century. Independence from Spain remained a minority strand and the focus became above all that of building of a strong autonomous reality. Post-Franco Catalan nationalism sought to build the greatest level of autonomy possible without producing a rupture with Spain.<sup>2</sup> In the words of Miquel Caminal, for Catalanism, the 'state is present and it is also absent'. Thus all of the major Catalan parties have acted as though a nation can be made (without a state).<sup>3</sup> Thus what occurred post-1980 can be described as proto state building. This remained the great paradox of Pujolist nationalism: that it did not seek its own state though the ambivalence of the movement he led made Pujol's ultimate intentions unclear. What



also became known as the Pujolist contradiction, often stating a more moderate position in Madrid than that in nationalist forums in Barcelona, increasingly became central to its discourse. The politics of ambiguity became a key element to the movement and political strategy of Jordi Pujol.

Spain's attainment of a modern parliamentary democracy was gradually achieved, being cemented with Spanish membership of the EEC in early 1986. By the same period, the full depoliticisation of the Spanish military was underway, though as late as January 2006 a senior Spanish military figure was removed from active service following his public criticism of Catalan autonomy and robust defence of Spanish unity. General José Mena suggested that it was the duty of the Spanish army to intervene in Catalonia if the new *Estatut* (Statute of Autonomy) went beyond the limits of the Spanish Constitution.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, whilst the new Spanish governments were strongly resistant to the consolidation of new nationalist governments in both Catalonia and the Basque Country, Spanish nationalism was deeply damaged by Francoism and both Spanish socialists and conservatives seemed unable to create a new model of the nation without appearing to sound like the regime they replaced. Neo-Francoist became a term used to describe aspects of Madrid policies in the 1980s by Basque and Catalan critics and it was not until the mid 1990s that a new Spanish nationalism emerged untainted by association with the dictatorship.

The Catalanist project under Pujol also attempted to influence the government of Spain and complete its modernisation. There was little real theoretical innovation under the Franco regime though CiU ascribed to itself the self-definition of a 'nationalist' formation rather than a reformulation of the traditional Catalanist stance of ERC and the *Lliga*. The *Lliga* under Prat de la Riba and Francesc Cambó held a clear conception of the defence of Catalonia and of Catalan intervention in Spain. In the 1930s, *Esquerra Republicana's* Catalanist project also included key roles in Spanish Republican governments. CiU however sought to intervene at a state level through applying levers of pressure, through negotiating, pacts and deals, but not by participation in the central government.

A Spanish-speaking immigration including a second generation and that comprised almost half of the population prevented any greater mobilisation of Catalan nationalism in the 1980s. As the new political project of Catalanism began, 38 per cent of the Catalan population had been born elsewhere in Spain. In the late 1880s, 98.8 per cent of the population had been born in Catalonia. The pragmatic practice of Pujolist nationalism was above all determined by this demographic fact. The monopolisation of the *Generalitat* from 1980 to 2003 by the nationalist project of CiU, led to a certain distancing by this Spanish-speaking immigration towards the autonomous government. Pujolism successfully connected with distinct layers of Catalan society, above all the middle tiers but other sectors remained outside of its orbit of influence. This included sectors of the business class, many of the richer Spanish-speaking families and much of the ordinary Spanish-speaking migration. Even so, these sectors did not mount anti-Catalanist campaigns nor prove capable

of mobilising substantial numbers against nationalism. However, unlike the forces of the Spanish centre and right, which seemed unable to offer a credible project in Spain until the late 1990s, both Basque and Catalan centre-right nationalism held legitimacy from the very beginning. Jordi Pujol had of course been tortured and imprisoned by the Franco regime and his role in the anti-Francoist struggle made it particularly difficult for the left to challenge him. Whilst the Spanish right struggled to distance itself from the regime over the same period, Basque and Catalan nationalisms were able to deepen their political projects.

With the electoral victory of Jordi Pujol's nationalist coalition CiU in 1980, the project of the reversal of the cultural destruction of Francoism began in earnest. The strategy of nationalist reconstruction had been developed amongst the nationalists over the course of the 1960s and 1970s and the attainment of political power now allowed for its implementation. This was facilitated by the fact that the period post-1980 was the longest period of peace and political stability since 1800. The legacy of popular revolt, brutal class conflict, war, revolution and dictatorship was at an end. The relative political stability of the 1980s can be explained by a series of conjunctural factors. The late 1970s and the economic crisis of these years, which continued until the mid 1980s, debilitated organised labour. Late Francoism and the early years of the transition had of course been marked by very high levels of strike action and working-class mobilisation. By the spring of 1980, Catalan unemployment reached 11.6 per cent and in strongly immigrant areas such as the Baix Llobregat, the figure reached 19 per cent. The crisis of the Keynesian economic model and the rise of what became known as 'neo-liberalism' had deep implications for a left-based project of social change. The economic crisis had its greatest impact on the morale of trades unions and the left's political transformationary agenda.

During the 1980s, the enormous population change that Catalonia had undergone stabilised. Over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the population experienced slow growth and reached a total of 3.2 million in 1950. Between 1951 and 1975 Catalonia underwent what has been termed the 'demographic explosion'. The population doubled, not only due to Spanish-speaking migration but also because of the baby boom. However in the period post Franco until the mid 1990s, population growth halted. At certain points in the 1980s and 1990s Spain had the lowest population growth in Europe and between 1981 and 1991, Catalonia experienced the smallest population growth of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> By 1986, only 5.8 per cent had arrived to live in the city of Barcelona in the previous eight years. In this period, for the first time since the Spanish Civil War, Barcelona lost population. This was also a population that was increasingly aging.

The relative stability of the Catalan population was also determined by there being little population mobility: most were educated and worked close to where they had been born. There was also in this period an increasing homogenisation of sectors of the population in terms of their cultural habits and practices.<sup>6</sup> In the 1960s a radical counter-culture was found as well as more



traditional sectors concerned at the erosion of supposedly eternal values. As in the rest of the peninsula, the family remained a strong institution, where there were few one-parent families and low divorce rates and where women's role in the labour market lagged behind that of its European counterparts. With a weak welfare state, the family retained its role as the key support mechanism for the unemployed and the young, as it did in the rest of the peninsula. The family as an institution demonstrated great resilience, surviving dictatorship, transition and economic crisis. Whilst divorce was introduced in Spain in 1981, as late as 2005 Catalonia still had a comparatively low divorce rate: 4.7 per cent. Most young people have continued to attach importance to the nuclear family, as in other Mediterranean societies. Catalan society has proven to be remarkably resilient and has not undergone social and political dislocation in spite of rapid and often abrupt change.

Thus Jordi Pujol's government, which took power in 1980, experienced a weakened labour movement and demographic stabilisation. Furthermore, the country experienced deep economic crisis. The city of Barcelona and its surrounding areas underwent de-industrialisation and contraction. The 1970s global economic crisis greatly impacted on Catalan industry which was heavily dependent on the import of raw materials. This crisis lasted from 1975 to 1985. Wages stagnated and unemployment rose steadily from 5 per cent in 1975 to 21 per cent in the early 1980s.<sup>7</sup> Over 20 per cent of those in employment lost their jobs. The relative strength of the industrial sector in the economy saw a decline from 48 per cent in 1975 to 42 per cent in 1979. Catalonia experienced a more severe economic crisis than elsewhere in Spain, a pattern repeated in the following decades. Catalonia has been consistently more affected by the economic cycle than the rest of Spain.<sup>8</sup> The autonomous government of the *Generalitat* had limited capacity in the economic terrain as the major macro-economic levers remained in state hands. In the Basque case, de-industrialisation, rocketing unemployment and the continued campaign of ETA produced a highly charged political situation throughout the transition years and beyond. Catalonia however, in spite of the economic crisis, exhibited tranquillity. The Catalan economy did not commence its recovery until Spain joined the EEC in January 1986. By 1988, Catalonia was receiving 24 per cent of Foreign Direct Investment in Spain, with over half of it coming from fellow EEC members. Pujol's government strongly encouraged this trend. The Catalan economy slowly increased its volume of exports, from 8 per cent in 1975 to 16 per cent by 1985. The service sector grew slowly from 54 per cent in 1979 to 59 per cent in 1985. However, it was not enough to replace the decline in the industrial sector and in 1987 Catalonia still had some 20 per cent unemployed.

In the same period it was also possible to detect structural changes in the Catalan economy that would later become important politically. Over the first half of the 1980s, Catalonia not only experienced smaller growth but also a small decline in its relative weight within Spanish industry. In 1979, Catalonia had contributed 25.6 per cent to Spain's GDP and this fell marginally to 25 per cent by 1985. By 2010, this had fallen to 19 per cent. In 1940, Madrid only

contributed 7 per cent of Spanish GDP, by 2010 this figure was 17.7 per cent. Thus the greater Madrid was close to rivalling all of Catalonia in economic weight. At the same time, it was also possible to detect a narrowing of the gap between Catalonia's income per capita, with Catalan growth of 0.2 per cent and a Spanish figure of 0.9 per cent.<sup>9</sup> Both of these measures would gradually produce an increasing sense of economic grievance. Catalonia seemed to be losing out on a number of economic variables. Deficits became noticeable in transport infrastructure where in spite of its continued industrial importance in Spain, Catalonia received only 11 per cent of state spending, which clearly limited its potential economic growth. Whilst the modernisation for the 1992 Barcelona Olympics contributed to the gradual construction of a new services-based economic model, as recently as 2000, Catalan industry still comprised 26 per cent of the overall Spanish economy.<sup>10</sup> Whilst it is more service oriented than previously, Catalonia has continued to be Spain's primary industrial producer. The increasing interdependency of the Catalan economy with the EEC and concomitant reduction of dependency on the Spanish market, would impact, in time, politically. Whilst Catalonia continued to retain economic power, the major political decisions were taken in Madrid.<sup>11</sup> As will be seen, frustration would grow at this social, political and economic fact.

Jordi Pujol and CiU's electoral victory of March 1980, cemented by an overall majority in 1984, ensured that it was the Pujolist conception of Catalan nationalism and identity that would be introduced through the institutional power of the Catalan government, the *Generalitat*. Inevitably, the key pivot around which these nationalist strategies would be framed was over the Catalan language. 'Concern for the language forms an essential part of Catalan nationalism' and nationalism and linguistic normalisation go together.<sup>12</sup> In the late nineteenth century when the political movement of Catalanism began, the vast majority of the population used Catalan as their first language. In the late 1930s, over 80 per cent of the population had used the language for everyday purposes, from workers, priests to even prostitutes.<sup>13</sup> With the reconstitution of the *Generalitat*, attention was increasingly given to the programme of linguistic 'normalisation' with the stated aim of making Catalan the normal language of the public sphere.

Whilst Catalonia has a long history of population movement, the scale and origin of the immigration of the 1950s and 1960s was different in intensity to anything seen before. One of the early phases of this immigration had taken place in the 1930s when a Catalan language education system was being constructed, which facilitated the adoption of Catalan by the new arrivals. The immigration wave of the 1920s and even more so in the 1950s, brought monoglot Spanish speakers from Aragon, Andalusia, Murcia and Extremadura. Yet many from this pre-Civil War immigration were able to integrate socially and culturally as in the 1930s Catalan was taught during the Second Republic.<sup>14</sup> However, the immigration of the 1950s and 1960s took place under the Franco dictatorship when the Catalan language was excluded from the education system and the public sphere. Thus the project of post-Franco Catalanism became that of 'normalising the school'. As the new initiative began, over 1.2



million people claimed not even to be able to understand Catalan. Over 40 per cent of the Catalan population used Spanish as the family language. Furthermore, it was notable that in areas with little or no immigration, over 80 per cent spoke Catalan. However these areas were largely confined to rural districts and the smaller towns outside of greater Barcelona. The normalisation of the language was also affected by the fact that Catalan speakers themselves had low levels of reading and writing ability. It is in this context that the polemical language law of April 1983 and its attendant strategy of linguistic normalisation is to be found.

Under the provisional *Generalitat* of the late 1970s, the Catalan language had been gradually incorporated into the curriculum under the auspices of a Madrid-sanctioned programme of bilingualism. Catalan was taught three hours per week but the new legislation and policy adopted ensured the strategic shift from the teaching of Catalan to teaching *in* Catalan. As late as 1979, Catalan was not even taught in 30 per cent of the schools and less than half of the school teachers, 43.5 per cent, spoke the language.<sup>15</sup> However, the new law gave overwhelming priority to the Catalan language. Significantly, soon after its passing, two parts of the law were sent to Spain's highest legal body, the Constitutional Court to assess its legality. As this law had been passed unanimously in the Catalan parliament this seemed, or was felt to be, an attack on Catalonia. The question of the language and its place in the education system became ever more controversial as the years passed and both the media and political class in Madrid began to focus on what they believed was a deliberate strategy to marginalise Spanish. The new educational institutions were the key terrain for Catalanisation and the programme of re-Catalanisation can be clearly seen as the attempt to reverse two of the most dramatic events of modern Catalan history. Firstly the impact of the Franco regime on language and culture. Secondly the associated demographic transformation. Most Spanish-speaking immigrants had not been given the opportunity to learn the language and in the late 1970s, over half of those who could not speak Catalan expressed the wish of learning it. Whilst linguistic normalisation was controversial in other areas of Spain, it did not appear to be so amongst Catalonia's own Spanish speakers. Most first-generation immigrants to Catalonia have not fully integrated, in the sense that they have not undertaken linguistic transfer from Spanish to Catalan. More importantly they have neither mobilised against nor become hostile to Catalanism. Post-transition Catalonia has not experienced, in spite of controversies over language planning laws, a resurfacing of *Neo-Lerrouxisme*.<sup>16</sup> Catalan is the only minority language in Europe that is also the language of social prestige.<sup>17</sup>

It was clear that in spite of the efforts of civic society led above all by *Òmnium Cultural*, the language remained in a weak position. The weakening of the language's status and role due to the persecution of Francoism of course determined the urgency of normalisation. Thus, the measures implemented were to achieve the Catalanisation of the school and, by implication, the populace at large. This was, as will be seen, not without controversy at an all-Spanish level, particularly following developments in the Catalan education system,

where the Catalan language became the sole instrument of instruction. Given the crucial role of family transmission in the survival of the language under the Franco regime, this seemed the only viable policy where the language was not used in the home.<sup>18</sup> It was firmly believed that only the education system could achieve this transformation. Linguistic immersion then was aimed at Spanish-speaking families. The child was to be 'immersed' in a Catalan-speaking environment in the belief that this would facilitate full integration.

The Spanish government began to transfer education to Catalan control in 1981, a move that was largely complete by 1983. The years following saw an incremental increase in Catalanisation measures. By the middle of the 1980s some 60 per cent of teaching was either totally or partially in Catalan. The creation of a Catalan curriculum in history and geography began in 1988.<sup>19</sup> By 1986, only 9.7 per cent of the population claimed that they did not understand Catalan and was aided by the expansion in Catalan language radio and television. This was in marked contrast to figures of almost 40 per cent who claimed to be unable to understand Catalan in late Francoism. A smaller contributory factor was the gradual decline in demographic weight of the largely Spanish-speaking monoglot first generation. Children of immigrants were schooled in Catalan, unlike their parents and all school children after the mid 1980s came into regular contact with the language. This gave rise to a relative optimism by the mid to late 1980s that the 'immigration problem' was gradually being resolved. However, closer analysis also revealed that actual usage of Catalan was very slow in increasing and in some social sectors actually fell. Only around 20 per cent of the Spanish-speaking immigration actually adopted the Catalan language as their main means of communication. In 2003, a *Generalitat* survey demonstrated this clearly. It showed that those young people born between 1974 and 1988 and almost all educated in Catalan had a lower usage of the language, 44.4 per cent, compared to those born between 1959 and 1973 who had a usage figure of 47.7 per cent. This was a surprising finding and seemed to be confirmation that the unprecedented measures of Catalanisation adopted by the 1983 law had been unable to increase the actual usage of the language.

However, the language had, for the first time, unprecedented status and support and institutional usage. The period of Pujolism made the language of ever greater importance in its strategy of Catalanism. Other aspects of Catalanism, such as that of industrial Catalonia leading the modernisation of Spain, became less important. Equally the campaign for self-government had been achieved, which had been central to political Catalanism in its first 50 years. The period post-1980 also determined a remarkable and lasting transformation in the status of Catalan culture. Due to its marginalisation and experience of repression it had been the expression of a non-institutionalised culture. Catalan had been a language associated with democratisation, or resistance and this now ceased to be the case. Evidence emerged for resistance to adopting Catalan by some sectors who felt that it increasingly represented the established order. Speaking Spanish in a Catalan language schooling system became a counter-cultural activity for some.

As Spain embarked on its PSOE-led modernisation project in the 1980s, the



Spanish language began to end any direct association between it and the Franco regime and saw its social prestige rise. Concern at a supposed erosion of Spanish in Catalonia became a mobilising element in the new wave of Spanish nationalism that emerged in the late 1990s. The measures of Catalanisation were later met with failed attempts to impose a Spanish national curriculum by the Aznar conservative government. Subsequent attempts were made to increase school time devoted to the Spanish language. One of the early expressions of increasing Spanish concern at Catalan language policies was the front page of the conservative Madrid daily, *ABC*, on 12 September 1993: 'Like Franco, but the reverse' which accused the Catalan government of trying to eliminate Spanish from the territory. This was the first phase in a dispute that has continued with varying degrees of intensity. Yet the Spanish Supreme Court had, in a ruling in 1994, given its support to the language policy adopted in Catalonia. Even so, negative perceptions of the Catalan language have continued to be held in much of Spain.

Whilst polemical, the 1983 language law was in fact relatively pragmatic. There were no penalties for non-observance.<sup>20</sup> All was testimony to the careful balancing act undertaken in the light of the demographic weight of the Spanish-speaking population. Equally, the wider political context of the failed military coup of February 1981 and the LOAPA ensured that the 1983 law did not guarantee the use of Catalan. Spanish retained a privileged legal position due to the Spanish Constitution of 1978.<sup>21</sup> Unlike its Basque counterparts, mainstream Catalan nationalism was above all a byword for caution and moderation. Thus it was that Jordi Pujol was declared 'Spaniard of the Year' by the conservative Spanish monarchist daily, *ABC*, in 1984. There was little or no opposition to these language policies amongst the Spanish-speaking immigrants and their children. This was due to the fact that Catalan remained the language of social advancement.<sup>22</sup> This would deepen as knowledge of the language became an essential requirement for public employment. After 1980, Catalan became the language of the parliament, of the government, of many of the town councils and of the universities.

At the same time, Catalan began its advance in the mass media. On 11 September 1983, the Catalan language television channel began broadcasting, offering a full range of programmes by early January 1984. Catalan television, *Televisió de Catalunya*, became one of the great modern success stories, often offering a more sophisticated output than its Spanish language rivals. It has retained around a quarter of the television market. Catalanisation of radio followed a little less successfully, though it expanded its reach particularly due to the expansion of local radio. The weakest sector of the early years of autonomy, however, remained the Catalan language newspaper market with only one daily, *Avui*, and Spanish language newspapers remained dominant. This was partly due to the fact that newspaper sales throughout Spain are lower than the European average and is a vivid testimony to the strength of visual media. Spanish language media was also part of a wider market, giving it a greater range and quality. Whilst the post-Franco period saw a large increase in the Catalan language publishing industry, the market was marked above all by

small print runs and weak sales figures.<sup>23</sup> This was not only because of low levels of book readership generally but was as a result of not enough people being literate in the Catalan language. Few born after 1936 could write the language, by 1981 only 15 per cent could do so.<sup>24</sup> The situation began to change when the Spanish language daily *El Periódico* launched parallel editions in Catalan and Spanish in 1997, which contributed to an increase in Catalan language newspaper sales to 20 per cent. A new Catalan language daily, *Ara*, was launched in 2010, and this was followed in 2011 by Catalonia's biggest selling and oldest daily, *La Vanguardia*, launching parallel editions in both languages, giving the Catalan language newspaper market greater diversity. These later changes were made possible by a generation emerging that was literate in Catalan through schooling and was testimony to one area of success for the language normalisation campaign. However, in spite of the many advances made since the early 1980s, the language continued to be little visible in magazine publishing, where the Spanish market remained dominant. The judiciary offered few opportunities to use the language and remained an area that mobilised language campaigners as did the overwhelmingly dominant Spanish language cinema.

Whilst in late Francoism and the transition civic society retained the initiative in language revival, this changed through the construction of an educational infrastructure. The decline in social mobilisation also led to fragmentation amongst social movements. Catalan autonomy and the new democracy offered employment opportunities for sectors of society that had largely been excluded by Francoism. This social sector had been a key leader in the social mobilisation in late Francoism.<sup>25</sup> For its left critics, CiU undertook an active policy of subsidising 'rightist' nationalism. An increasing and direct correlation was found between the language and culture. Both Spanish language publishing and Spanish language cinema had major centres of operations in Barcelona in the early 1980s but saw subsidies only extended to Catalan language publishing and for the dubbing into Catalan of films. A Catalan language cinema industry produced few artistic or commercial successes in contrast to the healthy situation in the Basque Country of both Spanish and Basque language production. Whilst the *Generalitat* lacked any real instruments of economic policy, cultural policy was one area that was fully devolved. CiU held a limited and limiting conception of Catalan culture, one that was often mocked by metropolitan intellectuals as one of *cantaires* and *sardanas* (singing and folk dances).

The ever growing political strength of Pujol and his version of Catalan nationalism deepened the crisis in Catalan socialism. As we have seen, during late Francoism and the transition to democracy in Spain, the political movement of Catalanism was dominated by the left. The left seemed certain to take control of the Catalan government in 1980, yet it was defeated and Jordi Pujol became president of autonomous Catalonia, a position he held until 2003. The apparent unity of the factions within Catalan socialism ruptured following the defeat at the hands of Pujol and a battle for the soul and direction of the party took place. It would take Catalan socialism 15 years to resolve the tensions



between its factions, and ultimately a moderate Catalanism would win out.<sup>26</sup> The hard left in the party, which evoked an internationalism and fraternal relations with the PSOE and was most suspicious of anything that smacked of nationalism, gradually declined in importance within the PSC. Equally the social democratic left increasingly accepted the free market ideas that emerged in the late 1970s. In contrast to both CiU and ERC, the PSC had a noticeable contingent, 35 per cent, who had not been born in Catalonia but rather the rest of Spain. This of course gave the party a distinctive profile crossing boundaries of class and language. In the mid 1980s, three-quarters of party delegates came from Barcelona and as late as 1982, 4.2 per cent did not fully understand the Catalan language whilst it was habitually spoken by approximately 72 per cent.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, the PSC came closest of all the main Catalan parties to reflecting the society to which it belonged. Over time it was noticeable that immigrants progressively adopted Catalan within the PSC and it became one manifestation of an often overlooked role of Catalanisation led by the Catalan socialists.

The landslide victory of Felipe González and the PSOE in the Spanish general election of October 1982 produced a temporary unity in the PSC but conflict re-emerged following the second defeat by Pujol in 1984. Whilst the near collapse of the PSUC enabled the PSC to attract many of its voters, the impact was not as great as was hoped as the implosion of the Spanish centre-right in the UCD allowed sectors of the moderate right in Catalonia to support Pujol. The conservative Spanish right was particularly weak and Pujol was able to create the *pal de paller*, the Catalan catch-all party. In the 1984 election in Catalonia which gave an overall majority to the coalition led by Pujol, CiU invoked the PSC as 'Madrid's representative'. By implication, only CiU could truly represent Catalonia. Over the 1980s, CiU experienced a constant and progressive advance in power and influence, with the building of a loyal electorate, firmly committed to its conception of nationalism. *Convergència i Unió* increasingly saw itself as the natural party of government.

The NATO referendum held in 1986 was a further fault line for Catalan socialism. The PSOE had won the 1982 election with a clear commitment to Spanish withdrawal from NATO yet in power the party adopted a controversial policy reversal. Catalan socialism was required to support Spanish party policy yet Catalonia itself in the subsequent referendum voted 'no' to continued membership of the alliance. The long period of Spanish socialist dominance in government ensured that the PSC was unable to capture the *Generalitat*. CiU won every Catalan election between 1980 and 1999, whilst the PSC was victorious in every Spanish general election. Part of the Spanish-speaking electorate abstained in the Catalan regional elections. Other sectors supported CiU in regional elections and the PSC in Spanish elections. With CiU dominant in the national terrain and the PSC dominant in the main cities and urban areas it is thus possible to speak of parallel power structures rather than alternation.<sup>28</sup> Catalan socialism and nationalism held sole power respectively for over 20 years, and in the case of the former, they continued to hold the most important municipal position, the mayorship and administrative

control of the city of Barcelona. The city council was the second most important in all of Spain and historically Barcelona had vied as an alternative capital of Spain. It was to counter socialist strength that in 1987 Pujol's government abolished the *Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona* (Metropolitan Area of Barcelona), the body responsible for municipal oversight, believing it to represent a regional counter power to his nationalist government. This move deepened hostility between the two largest Catalan political forces, the socialists and the nationalists.

During the late 1970s, following the demobilisation of social protest, an increasing individualism became evident across Catalan society and Pujolism was partly founded on this societal transformation. Whilst late Francoism had been marked by a highly mobilised working class and trades union movement, democracy evidenced little mobilisation though it saw the emergence of increasing middle-class grievance. CiU was highly skilled at channelling and connecting with this anxiety. The Catalanism that became dominant in the 1980s adopted ever more conservative positions. A new social, cultural and political hegemony became visible. The Pujolist discourse equated any attack on, or even lack of support for, Pujol or CiU with an attack on Catalonia and the identification of Catalanism with Pujolism became increasingly common. This relationship became most apparent over what became known as the *Banca Catalana* crisis. The *Banca* had played a prominent role in financing a wide range of Catalan cultural activities in late Francoism and had come to be seen by sectors of the middle class as a 'patriotic bank'. In the early 1980s, in a liquidity crisis, the bank collapsed. In May 1984, Pujol and other leading figures of the bank were charged by the Spanish judiciary with fraud and embezzlement. The political significance and the timing of the legal action was particularly controversial as Pujol had recently won the Catalan election with an overall majority and was charged a few days before his re-election as Catalan president. Pujol was exonerated in May 1986 but the case deeply damaged relations between the Catalan government and the Spanish socialists and the whole affair was widely perceived as an attempt by 'Madrid' to remove Pujol after failing to defeat him electorally. The intervention of the Madrid government saw the rallying of over 100,000 petit bourgeois and middle-class sectors in Barcelona to publicly support Pujol. The crisis passed with both his position strengthened and Catalan social democracy further undermined.<sup>29</sup>

For distinct reasons then, in the years immediately following the transition, both the PSC and the PSUC lost credibility as Catalan national forces. CiU ruled Catalonia as a majority government until 1999 and was embroiled in innumerable clashes with the PSOE concerning the devolution of powers to Catalonia and challenges to Catalan legislation from Madrid. By the end of the autonomous government's first year of existence in 1980, only 5,000 civil servants had been transferred to Catalan authority. The first PSOE government of 1982–1986 was deeply ambivalent towards the autonomies; they did not form part of its project of Spanish modernisation. Whilst the PSOE had been broadly favourable to autonomy in the mid 1970s, the Jacobin soul of the party



emerged as it discovered opponents in Basque and Catalan territories. These nationalists were often portrayed as right-wing relics of a former age.

*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, ERC, the once dominant political force of the 1930s barely survived the Franco regime though it did obtain political representation in the new Catalan parliament. Its support for CiU and Pujol after 1980 produced a further decline and by the mid 1980s this force was close to implosion. In the municipal elections of 1983, the party came close to a residual representation, obtaining fewer than 50 councillors. In the 1984 *Generalitat* election the party lost half of its electorate and the party declined further in 1988. A grouping centred around an extra-parliamentary party *Esquerra Nacionalista* (Nationalist Left) and Josep Lluís Carod i Rovira led the call to revive ERC as a left-liberal force of Catalanism and end its image as a mere satellite of CiU. Through infusions of new members from radical and pro-independence sectors, *Esquerra Republicana* was gradually revived. This changed both the leading cadres and the membership base of the party, resulting in a new political orientation. Symptomatic of the problems faced by the party, in 1991, ERC held only one councillor in the city of Barcelona and it increasingly prioritised obtaining a new urban base for itself. Following the proclamation of independence for Catalonia as party policy in 1989, ERC began to slowly revive under new leadership. By 1993, 66.8 per cent of those who attended the party congress had joined after 1989 and most had come to ERC through their previous membership of other pro-independence parties.<sup>30</sup>

ERC was convulsed however by a party revolt over the populist leadership of Àngel Colom and Pilar Rahola and they were overthrown in an internal coup in 1996. The ousted leadership attempted to create a new pro-independence formation but it rapidly collapsed. This attempt at creating a party solely concerned with independence and its very low level of support, further confirmed the *Esquerra* leadership in its belief that the party needed to project a coherent social agenda. From the mid 1990s, ERC re-launched itself as a pragmatic party that supports Catalan independence. ERC was thus forced through a new period of consolidation and was able to rapidly build a new support base, partly explained by a decline in support for CiU from the mid 1990s. Jordi Pujol's government, in power since 1980, increasingly represented the old order, particularly for first time voters. In 1995, *Esquerra* made its first real breakthrough, obtaining the best results since the 1930s. Between 1995 and 2003 the party increased its municipal representation from 525 to 1,383 councillors. This growth was made easier as CiU became increasingly trapped and damaged by its alliance with the Spanish *Partido Popular*. CiU was increasingly perceived to have formed an alliance with a party that became more and more strident in its Spanish nationalism.

The biggest political crisis of the era was faced by Catalan communism. As with its Spanish counterpart the PCE, the Catalan communists were rocked by factionalism between traditionalists and modernisers, compounded by electoral decline. In the mid 1980s, both Spanish and Catalan communism, following their electoral defeats, began a reconfiguration of the left and in Catalonia launched *Iniciativa per Catalunya* (Initiative for Catalonia). In spite

of its experience of splits and factionalism, Catalan communism was able to carve itself out a new mostly urban and middle-class electorate by the incorporation of green politics, becoming a left-green alliance.<sup>31</sup> Relations have been generally poor between the Catalan and Spanish post-communist movements, allowing *Iniciativa* to consolidate its defence of Catalanism.<sup>32</sup> It would be through the process of changes in both ERC and Catalan post-communism that an alliance of Catalan left forces became increasingly mooted from the mid 1990s. The old anti-communist leadership of ERC was no more, allowing the possibility of the forming of alliances with *Iniciativa*. Whilst the PSUC continued to exist within the structure of *Iniciativa*, the new formation was not a front for the historic force of Catalan communism. Equally, the social turn and adoption of a progressive social agenda on the part of ERC facilitated the improved relations with the post-communists. And so by the mid 1990s, there was a reconfiguration across the Catalan left with the PSC ever more determined to take control of the *Generalitat*.

Whilst Pujol repeatedly defeated all challengers from the left, he also resisted those who did not share his conception of Catalanist nationalism within his own ranks. Pujol remained opposed, unlike his predecessors, to there being a Catalan minister in the Madrid government. This was rooted in the failures of the *Lliga Regionalista* in particular, which between 1917 and 1936 had sacrificed Catalan interests for the social and political stability of Spain. Pujol took the decision to have only an external supporting role and follow a strategy of pragmatic possibilism. This took advantage of periodic moments of weakness of the Spanish government to obtain further national rights for Catalonia. Thus Pujol wanted to affirm the national personality of Catalonia whilst being supportive of the democratisation, modernisation and Europeanisation of Spain. Whilst the stability of the Madrid government was a key strategic objective, Catalan nationalism was not to be directly represented in the government. This non-participation led to one of the great crises in *Convergència i Unió* in the early 1990s, where the minority government of Felipe González required Catalan support. Whether CiU should directly enter the government in Madrid produced a deep schism between Pujol and his number two Miquel Roca.

In 1986, Miquel Roca sought to lead a new Spanish political formation, the *Partido Reformista Democrático* (Democratic Reformist Party), PRD. This was specifically designed as an alternative to the PSOE and to a Spanish centre-right still lacking in mainstream credibility. The PRD seemed to be a party that represented a liberal Catalan bourgeois sensibility. The PRD stood in the Spanish general election of the same year and crashed to a heavy defeat obtaining less than 1 per cent of the Spanish vote. This failure confirmed Pujol in his belief that the state-building to be undertaken was that of a prospective Catalan state.<sup>33</sup> This was not only a clash between two forms of Catalanism, but also symbolised the presidentialism of Pujol. All who challenged Pujol in the 1980s and 1990s were defeated until he was ready to appoint his own successor, Artur Mas. The rejection of direct Catalan intervention in Spanish political life determined the contours of Catalan nationalist intervention in the following years.<sup>34</sup> Though it can be described as a crisis that was internal to the conservative tradi-



tion of Catalan nationalism, it also represented an end point to a certain form of modernisation led from Barcelona.

In the 1993 crisis, Roca again sought a direct Catalan role in the minority Spanish government and directly clashed with Pujol. Roca was defeated and ultimately withdrew from political life. The clash brought out into the open one key element that became increasingly evident: the economic and political modernisation of Spain. As Spanish democracy became both stabilised and Europeanised, a project for Spanish modernisation led by Barcelona became increasingly anachronistic. Post-Franco Madrid grew in cultural, political and economic importance. The traditional view of the city as the home to the civil service and agricultural elites dominating industrial Barcelona is no more. Madrid, no longer a backwater compared to a modern Barcelona, is in fact now the richest region in Spain.<sup>35</sup> Madrid is the country's finance capital and has increased its capacity to pull in ever greater investment. By 2006, 80 per cent of large companies based themselves in Madrid whilst the greater Madrid region experienced rapid growth from the early 1980s. The Catalan project for Spanish modernisation which emerged in the very beginning of the *Lliga*, and its form of political Catalanism which had sought autonomy to regenerate Spain, were no longer relevant. This would increasingly mark Catalanism from the mid 1990s as the completion of one of its key historic goals produced a crisis in its future orientation.

Whilst the project of Spanish modernisation became less of a key priority for Catalanism, a new determinant became of greater importance in contemporary Catalanism, that of Europeanism. Under the Franco regime, Spain was excluded from the project of European union launched in the mid 1950s and Spanish membership was not finally obtained until 1986. Pro-European sentiment was very strong in Catalonia and it was the most active region in the European field.<sup>36</sup> Catalan business associations have been, from the very beginning, in the forefront of pro-EEC and EU organisations. The Europeanism of contemporary Catalanism echoes a long tradition in Catalanist discourse, which has seen Catalonia as an integrally European culture. As a by-product, it has also been a celebration of Catalan modernity, and was often contrasted with Castilian/Spanish backwardness.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, the Spanish market, once of pivotal importance to the Catalan economy, is of declining importance. In 2003, Spain for the first time received only 50 per cent of Catalan exports.<sup>38</sup> However, in spite of the persistent pro-Europeanism displayed by Catalan society and its political elites, the European Union has not allowed the growth of a strong regional tier or direct participation in its affairs by sub-national entities.<sup>39</sup>

Pujol's government post-1980 also began the construction of a form of Catalan foreign policy with a view to positioning itself as 'an independent actor within the EU'.<sup>40</sup> This has been to combine not only Catalan interests, whether cultural or economic, but to also seek the internationalisation of Catalonia.<sup>41</sup> Catalonia has been the most active foreign actor in the EU of all 17 Spanish autonomous governments. Between 1983 and 1999, 81 agreements with foreign governments were signed.<sup>42</sup> In 1988, Catalonia was a signatory to the

Four Motors agreement with Lombardy, Baden Württemberg and Rhône-Alps. It was an attempt by some of the richest European regions to forge their own regionalist strategy.<sup>43</sup> Yet whilst Catalonia remains a rich area in Spanish terms, it is much less so in European comparison.<sup>44</sup> The Catalan government increasingly sought to project its culture and identity internationally, engaging in what has been termed 'para-diplomacy'. The *Institut Ramon Llull* was created in 2002 with the mission to promote Catalan culture. By 2003, Catalonia had 50 trade and cultural offices, two embassies and two Catalan centres, the largest number of overseas offices of any autonomous community in Spain.

Over the course of the 1980s, the nationalist coalition of *Convergència i Unió* became the most important nationalist formation in the Spanish state and the most successful representative of state-less nationalism in western Europe. After 1979, its two components, UDC and CDC, fought every election as the coalition CiU. In 2002 the relations between the parties were altered and their official status has subsequently been that of a federation. Whilst CDC was by far the larger part in the coalition, *Unió*, attracted sectors of Catalan society which were more conservative and Catholic in belief, and prevented their incorporation into the *Partido Popular*. Thus CiU encompassed a broad political orientation of the modern democratic Catalan right. It included those supportive of historic Catalanism as well as those in favour of ever greater Catalan sovereignty. CiU included free market liberals, traditional social conservatives and Christian Democrats. Its transversal nature meant that the Spanish *Partido Popular* had its weakest support base in all of Spain in Catalonia as CiU occupied most of the political space of the centre and right.

Between 1993 and 2000, CiU played a pivotal role in the Spanish polity. Spanish socialists and conservatives required Catalan support for their minority governments. Jordi Pujol was described as almost a 'co-prime-minister' of the Spanish government during these years.<sup>45</sup> CiU's support of the Madrid government, first with the Spanish Socialists from 1993 to 1996, and post-1996 in support of the conservative PP, ensured the reign of free-market orthodoxy in Spain as well as convergence for entry into the euro. CiU at a Catalan level was responsible for the implementation of health and education policies, where the evidence belies its claims to being progressive. Expenditure on social protection in Catalonia was only 17.5 per cent compared to a Spanish average of 19.9 per cent and that of the EU of 27.6 per cent. Health had been transferred to Catalonia by 1980 and in the early years of the new *Generalitat*, it comprised some 50 per cent of the budget and continued to be the most important power transferred until the 1990s. CiU had also given important support to private education, subsidising a sector that was essentially run by the Catholic Church. By the end of CiU's tenure in power, Catalonia had one of the highest rates of privately educated children in Europe.<sup>46</sup> The strength of this private school sector was such that it resisted attempts at its reform by the left-liberal government after 2003. It is perhaps significant that whilst many of CiU's leading cadres describe themselves as liberal, a good part of its electorate describe themselves as on the right.<sup>47</sup>

CiU obtained direct concessions in the 1990s through its support of govern-



ments in Madrid. During its support of the PSOE, from 1993 to 1996, these concessions were heavily criticised by conservatives in Spain. Yet in the period 1996 to 2000, the minority PP government made even greater concessions in an agreement known as the Majestic pact, due to its taking place in a Barcelona hotel of that name. Whilst one of the major concessions with the PSOE had been tax concessions of 15 per cent, this was doubled under the PP agreement to 30 per cent. This was extended to all of the autonomous communities in Spain. CiU obtained greater fiscal autonomy and further rights over Catalan policing, as well as transport infrastructure including its ports. CiU also achieved the agreement of the PP to abolish military service and the role of civil governor, the latter felt to symbolise centralised control from Madrid. Catalan nationalism has only obtained these benefits when Spanish governments have needed their support so CiU's influence was minimal during the PSOE majority years from 1982 to 1993 and more significantly during the overall majority of the PP after 2000. Furthermore, CiU came close to losing the *Generalitat* in 1999 and until 2003 it was forced to rely on the Catalan PP to stay in power.

The *Generalitat* under Pujol repeatedly clashed with governments in Madrid of varying political hues over the policies and strategies of linguistic 'Catalanisation'. Whilst the language normalisation law of 1983 had produced some notable successes, it became increasingly evident that the Catalan language was failing to advance in many key areas. In the Catalan legislature of 1995–1999, CiU proposed a new language reform law (*Llei de Política Lingüística*) which created its own polemics, although, importantly it was broadly supported in the Catalan parliament. As Jordi Bañeres noted, this 1998 language law 'was the most ambitious that could be achieved without creating a social rupture'.<sup>48</sup> What has been described as 'weak normalisation of the private sector' led to a revisiting of language rights in the Catalan *Estatut* of 2006.<sup>49</sup> Important areas seemed immune to the presence of Catalan. By the late 1990s, around a quarter of all newspapers were published in Catalan. In the case of radio, a large part of the broadcasting had continued to be in Spanish which accounted for the imposition in the new law of a quota of 50 per cent Catalan content. The cinema industry continued to be largely impervious to the demands for a greater Catalan content.<sup>50</sup> The question of language revival emerged with renewed vigour from the mid 1990s due to the large numbers of new arrivals in Catalan society. Furthermore, it was not so clear that the first phase of language normalisation had been a resounding success, particularly in the schools. New evidence emerged that whilst knowledge of Catalan had greatly increased, the linguistic adoption of Catalan was more halting. In one survey in the mid 2000s, half of secondary school students declared that they viewed Catalan as a 'school language', not a street language and that they never spoke it outside of the schooling context.<sup>51</sup>

Following the end of communism in eastern Europe and the subsequent declarations of independence by the Baltic states, the Catalan parliament had in 1989 passed a motion supporting the Catalan right to self-determination. This year became a model example of institutional conflict between Madrid

and Barcelona.<sup>52</sup> This was also deepened in the run up to the Barcelona Olympics of 1992, where CiU sought a clear representation of Catalan identity to be conveyed internationally. The Catalanisation of the Olympics was important for internal consumption but the greatest effect of the event was to establish the city of Barcelona as a tourist destination.

In March 1992, Jordi Pujol had won his fourth consecutive electoral victory with 46 per cent of the vote. The continued failure of the PSC to win a Catalan election produced a leadership crisis and the re-emergence of the factionalism in the party that had remained relatively dormant since the early 1980s. In 1994, in what became known as the revolt of the party 'barons', Raimon Obiols was removed as PSC party leader following his third defeat at the hands of Pujol. In 1995, Pujol and CiU again won the Catalan elections, their fifth victory in a row. The PSC obtained a poor 25 per cent of the vote, in spite of a new candidate. The PSC was unable to distance itself from the rapidly declining fortunes of the PSOE and Felipe González, tainted by scandal and corruption. The search for a candidate that could beat Pujol finally resulted in the choice of Pasqual Maragall, former mayor of Barcelona and the architect of the city's hosting of the 1992 Olympics. Maragall had been a key rival to Pujol through his alternative power base in Barcelona city council. Thus began a new phase in the construction of political Catalanism and the project for Spanish modernisation formed around the idea of federalism.<sup>53</sup>

Maragall was charged with restoring the credentials of the PSC and distancing the party from association with the Socialist Jacobinism often seen in the PSOE. The invocation of federalism has its origins in the republican Catalanism of Valentí Almirall in the late nineteenth century. Maragall sought the recognition of Catalonia through a new multi-national conception of Spain.<sup>54</sup> In spite of leading the political movement of late Francoism and the transition, the left had subsequently failed to offer a coherent narrative that redefined Catalan identity. The first phase in this reconfiguration was Catalan socialist support for the candidacy of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero as new PSOE party leader in 2000. This PSC support was key to his victory against the then party apparatus of Spanish socialism. In the early phase of his leadership, Zapatero seemed to be proposing a federal modernisation of Spain, which had been Catalan socialist party policy since the late 1970s. Zapatero also supported the project for an updated and revised Statute of Autonomy. Maragall's Catalanist shift and backing for the new *Estatut* was not widely supported by his fellow Spanish socialists and was challenged at a Spanish level by certain PSOE barons. Whilst neither Maragall's call for the federalisation of Spain nor more traditional Catalan autonomy posed dangers to Spanish unity, this did not prevent mobilisation against them. The leader of the region of Extremadura antagonised sentiment by declaring that the term 'Catalan nation' did not respond to historical reality, further adding that both Catalonia and the Basque Country have 'never been nations'.<sup>55</sup> However Maragall's poor relations with sectors within the PSOE hierarchy facilitated his Catalanist credibility. In 1999, CiU came close to losing the *Generalitat* to Pasqual Maragall and the Catalan socialists. The PSC obtained its best result in Catalan elections with



almost 38 per cent of the vote, beating Pujol in number of votes obtained. However, CiU retained control of the *Generalitat* through an electoral system that gave a greater weighting to rural votes than those of the cities, the latter the key terrain of PSC strength. However, the poor showing of CiU determined the retirement of Jordi Pujol.

As noted, CiU became increasingly damaged in the legislature from 1999 to 2003 by its dependence on the PP. A revived *Esquerra Republicana* increasingly ate into CiU's electoral base and as ERC had adopted a clear distancing from CiU on social issues it seemed unlikely it would support a future CiU government. In December 2003, Maragall became president of the *Generalitat* and of the autonomous government of Catalonia. His investiture as president brought to an end 23 years of continued government by the nationalist coalition *Convergència i Unió*. Significantly, the victory of Maragall in 2003 was on the back of a 'defeat' with his party, the PSC, performing worse than in the last Catalan elections in 1999: it lost some 180,000 votes and ten seats.<sup>56</sup> Maragall's victory and CiU's defeat were in fact made possible by the substantially improved performance of the smaller progressive forces in Catalonia, *Esquerra Republicana* and *Iniciativa*, both of which doubled their representation. Maragall was thus able to form a rainbow coalition government of three parties, becoming known as the *tripartit*.<sup>57</sup> This government, which took over from a tired CiU administration, seemed the culmination of the Catalan left's hopes following the disappointment of 1980 and the continued electoral victories of CiU. The *tripartit* held power from 2003 until 2010 and in its early phase it appeared that CiU faced a serious challenger to its dominance in Catalan political life. CiU lost almost a quarter of its electorate over the 1990s and its loss of the *Generalitat* posed its biggest crisis yet. The pro-independence nationalists of *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* were the striking victors in the election of November 2003 and this was in spite of the party having suffered a split and ideological crisis in the early 1990s. ERC doubled its representation in the Catalan parliament and more strikingly won eight seats in the Spanish general election of March 2004. ERC increasingly began to believe it had a serious possibility of being able to supplant CiU as Catalonia's key nationalist force. This seemed close to being a real possibility after the Spanish general election result of 2004 where CiU's 835,000 was closely followed by a remarkable result from ERC with 652,000 votes.

The *tripartit* sought to prioritise social spending and was able to make a modest increase in its early years, in particular in health and education. However, social democracy had been transformed since the era of a radical PSC in the late 1970s and in many areas, including privatisations, the new government represented continuity with CiU. The *tripartit*, within a month of taking office, was plunged into crisis, leading to the departure of its *conseller en cap* (chief minister), Josep Lluís Carod i Rovira of ERC who was forced from office though not leadership of his party in January 2004. The political turmoil this caused, almost leading to the collapse of the new Catalan government itself, was due to the fact that Carod i Rovira had secretly met with ETA to encourage the organisation to adopt a ceasefire. Carod's meeting with ETA was monitored

by the Spanish security services which subsequently leaked it to the Spanish media. This also made the initial period of the *tripartit* unstable and fragile, with the party coalition put under severe strain. Further damage was caused when ETA subsequently declared a ceasefire, but *only* for Catalonia. This created a highly charged political atmosphere which only calmed following the Spanish general election of March 2004.

Maragall's Catalanisation of the PSC was reflected in its policy call for the federalisation of Spain and for a new Statute of Autonomy. Due to its support for the PP, CiU had been unable to achieve revisions to the *Estatut* and now saw the measure proposed by its political opponents. Inspired by Blairism, Maragall also saw the changes in the PSC as indicative of a move beyond the politics of left and right. A consequence of this broad church strategy was a further dilution of the social-democratic content of the PSC and thus a narrowing of its differences with CiU on questions of political economy. Since the transition, divisions within the PSC have also been related to its electoral constituency, its core vote, made up, on the one hand, of Spanish-speaking workers and, on the other, of liberal-social democratic middle-class and cosmopolitan Catalanists. As with other west European social democrats, this was a fragile coalition. The PSC won the *Generalitat* in 2003 by a narrow margin and with a substantial loss of votes. Notably, abstentions in the industrial areas surrounding Barcelona were high.<sup>58</sup> This fragility was also heightened by Maragall's pursuit of the Catalan business lobby. As the president of the most important forum of Catalan business, the *Fomento de Trabajo Nacional* (Promotion of National Work), declared before the Catalan elections of 2003, 'Business does not fear a Maragall government'.<sup>59</sup> This is a notable shift on the part of Catalan business in relation to the prospect of a PSC government in 1980, where it was at the forefront of a campaign against a 'Marxist government', as we have seen.

Maragall seemed unable to capitalise on the increasing cases of corruption that were periodically linked to the *Generalitat* under CiU and he caused a political storm as president when he referred to the 3 per cent commission which, he alleged, CiU charged companies for the awarding of public contracts. Illegal funding affected both components of the CiU coalition and scandal later included the leading figures of CiU in the 1980s, Macià Alavedra and Lluís Prenafeta as well as Javier de la Rosa, once described by Jordi Pujol as a 'model businessman'. In 2010, the illegal financing of the *Palau de la Música Catalana* was revealed to have partly funded CiU, through its think tank. Whilst Maragall failed to challenge CiU over corruption, he also seemed ambiguous and contradictory in his critique of the Catalan nationalism as practiced by his opponents. On major political questions, from the 'financial' question, through to the policy of federalism and the creation of Catalan sporting entities, Maragall and the PSC followed the position of CiU.<sup>60</sup> This seemed a reflection of the CiU-led Catalanisation of society. It seemed further confirmation that the PSC had failed to construct a successful alternative to the Pujolist conception of Catalanism and the nation. All Catalan parties, from CiU to the Greens, call for greater Catalan autonomy. The only party opposed to further quotas of self-government, the conservative Spanish Popular Party, generally obtains around



12 per cent of the vote, and periodically has, in an attempt to obtain greater support, tried to present itself as Catalanist through leadership changes and the evocation of the conservative Catalanism represented by Francesc Cambó. However, these changes have not changed perceptions of the party within Catalonia.

The first indications of renewal in the political project of Catalanism after 2003 was the wide-ranging and broadly-supported calls for the reform of the Statute of Autonomy, the *Estatut*, promoted by all Catalan parties except the PP. This was highly controversial at a Spanish level because these calls from Catalonia coincided with the *Plan Ibarretxe*, the Basque nationalist plan for semi-independence from Spain, which was seen as leading towards the break-up of Spain. The increased hostility on the part of the PP towards the sovereignty drive of the nationalists whether Basque, Catalan or in the Balearics, led Pujol to accuse Aznar of breaking the pact of the transition concerning Spain.<sup>61</sup> Many commentators noted that Spanish nationalism re-emerged with renewed vigour in the early twenty-first century, and the Popular Party attempted to tarnish the PSOE with being weak on Spanish unity. The carefully constructed Catalan *Estatut* was repeatedly watered down, firstly through bilateral negotiations with the Madrid government, where its ultimate powers were determined. No external or foreign policy was permitted and the early negotiations offered little change in the key area of financing. Taxation remained firmly in the hands of the central government. This latter area was one of the key areas of dispute, as were powers over the language, the definition of Catalonia as a nation and judicial power. The *Estatut* introduced the 'duty of knowing Catalan', equating the language with the protection afforded to Castilian Spanish by the Spanish Constitution of 1978. Opinion polling showed that 49 per cent of Spaniards were opposed to the *Estatut* and more than 62 per cent disputed the notion that Catalonia was a nation.<sup>62</sup> As the leader of the Spanish opposition, Mariano Rajoy put it in December 2005, 'There is only one nation, [the] Spanish one'.<sup>63</sup>

The relatively harmonious relationship with Spain that was established by the pragmatic movement led by Jordi Pujol, in contrast to the conflict and tension in Basque-Spanish relations, was subject to a series of crises not seen since the late 1970s. The *Estatut*, crafted from 2005 to 2006 was the central focus of alternative political visions in Madrid and Barcelona. Economic, social and cultural trends that can be traced to the mid 1990s produced new political responses, including a growth in pro-independence sentiment. The general political situation in Spain was fraught, with rising political tension between Spain's two major parties and the breaking of more consensual politics established during the transition to democracy. The opposition *Partido Popular* led a series of street protests against the policies of the Zapatero government and in two of these protests, in April and December 2005, Catalonia was their focus. For much of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Catalonia attracted greater political attention than at any time since the transition. Initially this was due to the emergence and consolidation of *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*. These years have also seen a growth in pro-independence sentiment and an

unprecedented mobilisation of Catalan civic society. In November 2009, all of the major Catalan newspapers published together an editorial in support of Catalan language, identity and the *Estatut*.<sup>64</sup> Yet a deep fragmentation amongst the political parties, competing not only in terms of traditional left-right politics but also over Catalanism, occurred. The impasse over the *Estatut* made this fracture more striking.<sup>65</sup>

The election of November 2003 signified many things and one was that the domination of the great forces in Catalan politics, the PSC and CiU, was seriously challenged for the first time, both forces mustering only 60 per cent of the Catalan vote, a drop from a figure of around 75 per cent for nearly all Catalan elections since 1984.<sup>66</sup> The autonomous elections of November 2003 represent the definitive breaking of the two-party system around CiU and the *Partit Socialista de Catalunya*.<sup>67</sup> No Catalan party has been able to form an overall majority since 1995 and as such the smaller parties have attained greater importance. Whilst CiU had been able to govern alone until 1999, its final phase was a minority government. The *tripartit* was of course a multi-party coalition and whilst the Catalan elections of 2010 represented a clear victory for CiU, it was once again as minority government. The Catalan parliament after 2010 was even more fragmented than in previous years, with seven parties obtaining electoral representation.

The failures over the *Estatut* damaged above all the PSC and ERC and saw *Convergència i Unió* gradually rebuild its electoral strength. Pragmatic supporters of Catalan independence increasingly turned back to CiU and away from ERC. The years out of power between 2003 and 2011 had been particularly difficult for the coalition CiU. Victory in the autonomous elections of November 2010 re-affirmed the centrality of CiU and the coalition attracted younger voters who had been disillusioned by the *tripartit*. CiU also became the force that attracted most of those supportive of independence even though the leadership contained those opposed to it. CiU had been punished in the late 1990s after having been in power for almost 20 years. In 2010 to 2011, CiU benefitted as those who had been incumbents during the economic crisis were ejected from power, as happened throughout Europe.

Both the Catalan socialists and *Esquerra Republicana* were heavily defeated in 2010 and this was followed by defeats for both forces in the municipal elections of spring 2011. For the first time under democracy *Convergència i Unió* was the largest municipal force in Catalonia. Socialist collapse was conveyed more than anything by the loss for the first time of the flagship Barcelona city council, which as we have seen, had built up a reputation as a rival power base to the Catalan regional government. The crisis in the Catalan socialist party was confirmed by the Spanish general election of November 2011, held in an atmosphere of impending economic crisis. The PSC experienced its worst electoral result since democracy was restored in Spain in the late 1970s. Between 2003 and 2010 the Catalan socialists held the greatest concentration of power in its history, holding the *Generalitat*, the city of Barcelona and most of the main municipal governments. The years 2010 to 2011 represented its worst results in its history, obtaining less than 20 per cent of the vote.



The challenge once posed by ERC to CiU in the nationalist terrain had clearly been contained with *Esquerra* losing almost half of its votes after 2004. In 2010, ERC obtained its worst result since 1988, an erosion of the substantial advances the party had made since the mid 1990s. Furthermore, ERC was no longer able to claim a monopoly of the pro-independence forces as a new formation entered the Catalan parliament, winning four seats. The fragmentation of pro-independence sectors both in the mainstream and towards extra-parliamentary forces was particularly damaging to the party. By 2010, ERC had the lowest level of voter loyalty of all of the main Catalan parties. ERC not only lost support to new pro-sovereignty formations but also many of its more moderate voters. The end of the *tripartit*, and the crushing defeat for its two principal forces, ERC and the PSC, made such a future centre-left coalition highly unlikely again, even if the electoral arithmetic permitted its hypothetical revival. Whilst the *tripartit* did make some social advances, its removal from power after seven years represented a profound failure for the combined forces of the Catalan left. Yet in spite of the clear damage support for the *Partido Popular* had done to CiU in the years 1999 to 2003, the Catalan federation again established informal support and agreements with the PP on political economy after 2010. The CiU that emerged increasingly contained within itself two principal forces as within the Scottish National Party: gradualists and fundamentalists. Whilst CiU attracted a great deal of the pro-independence vote, its leadership remained cautious about leading the movement. It was notable that during the years of Zapatero and the PSOE (2004 to 2011) in spite of their being a minority socialist administration, CiU was but one potential partner amongst many and until 2008, ERC was often favoured over CiU. Equally, the landslide electoral victory of the PP in November 2011, meant that CiU had little or no influence in Madrid. Even so, austerity measures to deal with the financial crisis saw common cause on political economy between CiU and the PP.

Since the mid 1990s, in spite of fiscal concessions made to Catalonia by both the PSOE and the PP governments, the comparative decline of the Catalan economy has continued.<sup>68</sup> Whilst in 1983 Catalonia had the second highest GDP throughout Spain, by 2010 it had slipped to fourth place.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, Catalonia received the largest number of immigrants of any Spanish autonomous community which impacted on society in ever greater demands on transport, schooling and health care. What has been termed the 'financial question' has been at the heart of power struggles between Madrid and Barcelona. It has also been closely linked to business calls for greater self government as well as its apparent impact on Catalan competitiveness. Thus Catalonia with 16 per cent of Spain's population, pays 22 per cent of taxes received by the Spanish government but receives only 8 per cent of investment. In the late 1980s, Catalan economic leadership and prominence within Spain was noticeable. Two key developments gradually transformed its position. The first was Spanish membership of the EEC and the transfer of funds from Brussels to the comparatively poorer areas of Spain. From 1986 to 2006 Spain received three-quarters of EU structural funds.

Secondly, after 1987, Catalonia began to receive lower levels of state public spending. By 1996 state spending in Catalonia was 75 per cent that of other parts of Spain. So whilst Catalan GDP is comparatively high, income is much lower because of fiscal transfer to Madrid. This continued into the new century meaning that by 2010 Catalonia received only 66 per cent of state funding and areas such as health and education were particularly disadvantaged.<sup>70</sup> This difference represented a financial deficit for Catalonia of between 7 and 8 per cent of its GDP. During the 1990s, the province of Barcelona received the lowest public investment in all of Spain.<sup>71</sup> As the head of Catalonia's leading business organisation, the *Foment* declared, 'the lack of public investment in Catalonia is a threat to our growth and to that of all of Spain'.<sup>72</sup> However Catalan business also saw the *Generalitat* as a relatively minor player with little real capacity to intervene in the economy.<sup>73</sup> The growing economic crisis in Spain from the spring of 2008 inevitably fed into changing political discourse. The Spanish bank and savings bank crisis had particular import in Catalonia where *La Caixa*, Catalonia's largest company, had an annual budget 12 times larger than the Catalan autonomous government.<sup>74</sup> This economic power had meant that it was strong enough to be immune from political interference in contrast to the close nexus often found in Madrid, Andalusia and Valencia. *La Caixa* was the largest savings bank in Europe and the third largest financial institution in Spain. However, other smaller Catalan savings banks were forced to accept terms and ownership from Madrid.

When the Catalan Statute of Autonomy was passed in 1979, non-Spanish immigration to Catalonia was negligible. As we have seen, during the first phase of autonomy, there was little or no population growth. At the very point where Catalonia could speak of the relatively successful integration of its Spanish speakers, from the late 1990s a new demographic challenge emerged. A population of six million in 1995 had, by 2010, expanded by over one million people during the wave of non-Spanish immigration. Put another way, 25 per cent of the immigration that has transformed modern Spanish society settled in Catalonia. 700,000 new arrivals were added between 2000 and 2005.<sup>75</sup> This represented the most intense cultural change of the previous 100 years. This immigration has brought ethnic, religious and cultural differentiation. This can be contrasted to that of the previous two centuries of internal migration of Spanish speakers who shared Catholic religious culture. It has also meant an increase in the number of the young as most economic immigration tends to be of those under 35 and has thus contributed a relative dynamism to a demographically unchanging society. Much of the population growth of contemporary Catalan society now comes from immigration. In contrast to other periods of population change which was heavily concentrated in Barcelona, this immigration was more evenly spread throughout Catalonia. Only around a third was concentrated in the Catalan capital.<sup>76</sup>

Whilst the state government largely benefits from the immigration through extra taxation and social security receipts, most of the costs are borne by the autonomous governments, who must provide funding for extra healthcare, education and social programmes. It is this that has given particular urgency



to the immigration debate. The *Estatut* of 2006 sought to give to Catalonia sole responsibility for the administration of immigration policy.<sup>77</sup> Immigration impacted on the labour market, producing an overall reduction in salaries with immigrants receiving lower wages, a figure that is even greater when their status is unofficial.<sup>78</sup> Those of working age (16 to 64) grew by some 800,000 in these years, almost entirely due to the new arrivals.<sup>79</sup> Unemployment has, as with Spain, remained consistently high in European terms though immigrants are not directly competing in the labour market. During the boom years, from the mid 1990s till 2008, much immigrant labour worked in construction and tourism, sectors traditionally marked by low wages and little innovation. By 2006, over 15 million tourists were visiting Catalonia annually and in the decade after 2000, Barcelona had the second highest tourist growth of cities in Europe. Catalan society has manifested outbursts of intolerance and xenophobia since the late 1990s, often overlapping with questions associated with the building of mosques, Islam and the burka. However, whilst the economy boomed, the new immigration also allowed second generation Spanish speakers to rise in social standing. The new immigration posed a serious challenge to the three decades old strategy of linguistic normalisation.

At the same time, a redefining of Catalan identity due to new waves of immigration created challenges for the wider culture. The Pujolist attempt at the creation of an officially sanctioned Catalan culture was subject to challenge. Prior to the new immigration, the Catalan cultural debate had revolved around the status of the language and the normalisation of its culture in relation to Spanish dominance. Subsequently, new debates were necessary over multiculturalism and traditionalist forms of Catalan nationalist expression. Whilst the new immigrants made pragmatic choices as to which language, Spanish or Catalan, to learn first, around 100,000 a year enrolled in Catalan language courses. Official priority became that of ensuring that the Catalan language was the primary language to be adopted by the new immigrants. However, in practice the language adopted would depend on the place of location. Before this new immigration began, it was noticeable that Castilian Spanish continued to be used as the habitual language of communication in the greater Barcelona area by more than 60 per cent of the population. This can be contrasted with data for the Catalan interior such as Osona where only 20 per cent used Spanish as their everyday language. However, in contrast to the mass migration of the 1950s and 1960s, the new immigration and their children are schooled in Catalan and knowledge of the language remains essential for social advance.

In many areas of the workplace the Catalan language had become the normal language and of social prestige. A correlation can also be found between usage of Catalan and educational level.<sup>80</sup> All wider language surveys point to a continual jostling for influence between Catalan and Spanish with neither language likely to be either hegemonic nor subject to marginalisation.<sup>81</sup> However both Catalan and Spanish nationalism expressed repeated concern at the situation of their respective languages. The former nationalism expressed concern at the erosion of Catalan, whilst Spanish nationalism increasingly claimed that Catalan language normalisation was leading to the

erosion of Spanish. Both arguments, through selective use of data, could support their antagonistic positions. Bilingualism has become generalised and each language exhibits both strengths and weaknesses. There were more Catalan users in absolute terms (35 to 37 per cent by 2010), but fewer using it as their main language. Catalan is more widely used in the workplace but its usage in the school, outside of the classroom, is less so. However data also points to Spanish speakers adopting Catalan at work and some making a shift to using it more frequently. Almost all Catalan-speaking families transmit the language to their children but Catalan has not become the language of majority usage, contrary to the hopes of the 1983 language law. However, perhaps of more significance, there is very little evidence of the young being divided by language or the emergence of two closed or antagonistic linguistic communities.

In spite of the regular crises that surrounded its first term in office, with tensions between its three constituent parts but above all between the *Partit Socialista de Catalunya* and ERC, the *tripartit* was renewed in November 2006, though with substantial differences.<sup>82</sup> Notably, the architect of the first post-Pujol Catalan government, Pasqual Maragall, departed to be replaced by José Montilla.<sup>83</sup> Montilla became the first president of the *Generalitat* not to have been born in Catalonia and seemed to symbolise the triumph of Catalan integration policies. However, though Montilla exercised greater control over the coalition than Maragall, fragmentation was greater in the period 2006 to 2010. The weakness of the *tripartit* since 2003 can be explained by its constituent parts. The coalition represented distinctive political cultures, and experienced strong factionalism not only between its three components, but also within them. In the years Montilla was president, between 2006 and 2010, relations between the sister parties of the PSC and the PSOE were, in spite of Montilla's status as party 'baron', particularly fraught due to delays in the implementation of the new *Estatut*. Significantly, it was José Montilla who warned in a speech in Madrid in November 2007 of the growing disaffection of the Catalans that could lead to demands for a breach with Spain.<sup>84</sup> The PSC was the political force most damaged by the decision of the Spanish Supreme Court over the *Estatut*. This key measure had been central to PSC strategy to stabilise Spanish–Catalan relations. There are important demographic and structural problems faced by the PSC, with an ageing electorate and progressive Catalans increasingly drawn to ERC and the post-communists of *Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verds*. Notably, the PSC vote declined in the elections in 2003 and 2006, in the latter case obtaining its worst result since 1995. The economic crisis that reached Spain after the summer of 2008 accelerated these tendencies.

The experience of the first *tripartit* placed ERC under extraordinary strain as it attempted to straddle a shift to the political mainstream whilst maintaining a still relatively radical activist base. Whilst it seemed that a glorious future awaited ERC following the Catalan regional elections of November 2003 and the Spanish general election of March 2004, the party was unable to capitalise on its extraordinary electoral breakthrough. By 2008, the party had doubled its membership to 10,000 with half of the new recruits joining since 2004. ERC



seemed to be threatening to rupture the Spanish political system established since the transition. The party leader, Josep Lluís Carod i Rovira became one of the most unpopular politicians in Spain and, for the forces of Spanish conservatism, the subject of particular hostility. In particular, his public statement opposing Madrid's Olympic candidacy contributed to the subsequent wave of anti-Catalanism.<sup>85</sup> The demonstrable political inexperience of ERC led to a series of self-inflicted wounds culminating in its departure from the *tripartit* in the spring of 2006. ERC lost some 140,000 votes in the November 2006 election. The disappointment of the hopes invested in it, and an increasing factionalism post-2006 led to a greatly reduced result for the party in the Spanish general election in March 2008, with ERC falling from eight to three seats. The ever more overt moves to unseat Carod i Rovira as ERC party leader gained momentum and in June 2008, following a party congress, the party leadership went to Joan Puigcercós. The new party leader, whose power base lay with both the party bureaucracy and activists, faced an immediate crisis as in the spring of 2009 one of the *Esquerra* factions, *Reagrupament*, left the party, calling for the creation of a new pro-independence formation. In the European elections of June 2009, ERC slipped back to a similar result to that of 1999, a demonstration of the party's failure to consolidate its breakthrough in 2003 to 2004. The situation for the party worsened in 2010 to 2011. However, the significance of ERC lies above all its moving the question of Catalan independence to the mainstream. Support for Catalan independence is no longer coterminous with support for ERC.

The hardening of Spanish nationalist sentiment in the period post-1998 had as a by-product the emergence of an overt anti-Catalan hostility on the part of Spanish conservatism. Spanish–Catalan tension was at its highest between 2003 and 2006, exemplified by the acting out of a series of dramatic events before the Spanish media: the resignation of the *conseller en cap* and leader of ERC, Josep Lluís Carod i Rovira from the Catalan government; an ETA ceasefire *only* in Catalonia; the return of the Salamanca Papers to Catalonia; the sacking of a Spanish general, as well as an organised boycott of Catalan goods led from Madrid.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, the *Partido Popular* claimed to have collected over four million signatures against the new *Estatut* whilst conservative sectors and senior PP figures including the leader of the Spanish opposition, Mariano Rajoy, continually raised the spectre of the break-up of Spain. Of all of Spain, the *Partido Popular* obtains its lowest support in Catalonia. More importantly, an alliance between the PP and socialists is unimaginable in a Catalan context, yet this is exactly what happened in the Basque Country in 2009, where both parties allied to remove the nationalists from power. In particular the posture and policies of the Basque Socialists (PSE) can be contrasted with the PSC, the former part of an anti-Basque nationalist government, the latter increasingly asserting its Catalan identity. As we have repeatedly seen, the PSC bears little relationship to its counterparts in other Spanish regions, and its own voters increasingly saw it as ever more Catalanist in orientation.<sup>87</sup>

The peculiar phenomenon that is anti-Catalanism has a long pedigree.<sup>88</sup> It

has its origins in the revolt of the Catalans in the seventeenth century and was cemented by Catalan industrialisation and modernisation before much of Spain. The Catalan attempt to lead 'Spanish modernisation', was, as we have seen, not well received. It is noticeable that neither the *Plan Ibarretxe* nor indeed the campaigns of ETA led to calls for the boycott of Basque goods. The Catalan *Estatut* was perceived as a territorial threat to Spain. It is significant that the only revised statute of autonomy opposed by the PP has been that of Catalonia. Almost 120 articles of the *Estatut* were considered by the *Tribunal Constitucional* in spite of many clauses sharing close parallels with the statutes of autonomy of communities as diverse as La Rioja and Andalusia.<sup>89</sup> Whilst Miquel Roca's project for a Catalan-led modernisation in the mid 1980s had been poorly received, Maragall's federalisation of Spain was even less so. Spanish political culture was unreceptive to lessons or leadership from the Catalans. By 2011, Pasqual Maragall and his predecessor expressed increasing support for Catalan independence from Spain.

Political Catalanism has invested highly in Europeanism as a project that would provide an intermediate space which would allow Catalonia to by-pass 'Spain'. CiU and Pujol were firm believers through the 1990s that globalisation and European integration were leading to the decline of the nation state. Yet the constitutional treaty of the European Union and subsequent revisions, have consolidated already existing nation-states and their territorial integrity and does not allow for an increased role for the regions. Post-2008, the European economic crisis also revealed that national governments jealously guarded their own sovereignty. During the first 40 years of the twentieth century, Catalonia had been a major source of contestation for the Spanish state, combining in its territory, nationalist demands with a radical anarchist-dominated labour movement. Since the transition to democracy in the 1970s, it has been the Basque Country that has posed a radical challenge to Spain. In any assessment of the trends present in contemporary Catalonia, it is important to recall the striking unanimity in support of Catalan autonomy when, as early as 1918, 98 per cent of Catalan town councils expressed their support for it.<sup>90</sup> This unanimity was repeated in the 1930s, and again in the late 1970s and was also seen over a revised Catalan autonomy statute and its subsequent approval in the June 2006 referendum with over 70 per cent approval. Prior to the referendum, the *Estatut* had been passed in the Catalan parliament in September 2005 with over 80 per cent support.

As autonomy became embedded in Spain, and non-historical nationalities such as Castile and La Rioja obtained comparative powers to both the Basques and the Catalans, both regional nationalists sought to accentuate their differences with other regions in Spain. Here is to be found the origin of the sovereignty drive of both peripheral nationalist movements, which saw both of their respective projects for greater self-government prevented by the Madrid government. In the case of the Basque nationalists, the semi-sovereignty programme known as the Ibarretxe plan was defeated by Madrid. Catalonia's more consensual autonomy statute was watered down by the PSOE government in Madrid, by the Spanish parliament and finally by the Spanish



Supreme Court. By the end of this process, CiU had embarked on a strategy of fiscal sovereignty, seeking the economic levers held by the Basque regional government. The principality has experienced a new wave of immigration totalling over one million. Its comparative economic decline apparent since the early 1980s has given renewed urgency to the claim for greater control over decision making, particularly to those areas concerning the economy. The delayed implementation provoked a revival in civic society leading many, for the first time, to give serious contemplation to Catalan independence.

## Epilogue: Towards Independence?

From the mid 2000s, there has been an unprecedented social, political and cultural shift towards the adoption of a political strategy of independence for Catalonia. This change has been seemingly rapid though its emergence can partly be accounted for by structural changes relating to Catalonia's economic and political weight within Spain. Between September 2009 and April 2011, Catalonia underwent a striking mobilisation of civil society. This took the form of a popular initiative for a non-binding referendum campaign, whose sole purpose was to ask whether Catalonia should become an independent state within the European Union. The EU has clearly impacted on how national identity is both constructed and contested.<sup>1</sup> Following the first referendum in the small Catalan town of Arenys del Munt, a series of votes was organised throughout Catalonia. Over 800,000 people in some 500 municipalities took part, with the process culminating in the city of Barcelona in April 2011. Overall turnout averaged 27 per cent which was a striking figure for what was simply unofficial and non-binding. To facilitate the organisation, over 25,000 volunteers participated. This cycle of referendums lasted over a year and a half. Where referendums took place, support was over 90 per cent in favour of independence, indicating a strong correlation between support for independence and participation in the polls. These referendums have also been complemented by three historic demonstrations: February 2006, December 2007 and July 2010. The Catalan movement for political independence emerged as a key protagonist in the territory's political landscape.

Catalan nationalism was distinctive to that of the Basque Country, where commitment to political independence was found in its origins. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the *Lliga Regionalista* was the dominant Catalan political force. Its electoral manifesto of 1916 captured its dual vision and political strategy: *Per Catalunya i l'Espanya Gran* (For Catalonia and a Greater Spain). It was a political movement that sought Catalan leadership in Spain and bore strong parallels to that of the north of Italy. Both Catalonia and northern Italy saw themselves as modernising forces against the sclerotic, bureaucratic and often corrupt capitals of Madrid and Rome. Both forces also saw themselves as representing a political and cultural vanguard against illiteracy, landlordism and backwardness. However, Catalonia also possessed a distinctive language and cultural identity. In 1919 in a well-known coinage, a prominent Spanish politician Niceto Alcalá Zamora addressed the *Lliga* parliamentary leader in Madrid, Francesc Cambó. Alcalá Zamora said that he (Cambó) was trying to be both the Bolívar of Catalonia and the Bismarck of Spain, and that these were contradictory pretensions and he would have to



choose one or the other.<sup>2</sup> The representative of conservative Catalanism, the *Lliga*, at pivotal moments of political turmoil and social upheaval in 1917, 1923 and 1936 chose Spain and social order.

Francoist victory in the Spanish Civil War represented the defeat of all variants of Catalan nationalism and Catalan language and culture was severely repressed. Yet there was no major intellectual re-configuration of Catalanism or intellectual breakthrough against the pre-Civil War postulates. The cultural and political crisis that the persecution of the regime unleashed was such that the priority of cultural and political activists went little beyond survival of the regime's persecutions. Later, a preservation phase occurred which was in turn followed by a cautious reconstruction in the late 1950s. At the height of Francoist persecution, no breach in the Catalan relationship with Spain was proposed. Emblematic of this was the influential Catholic thinker Josep Armengou who stated in 1958 in a samizdat manuscript distributed amongst the Catalanist opposition, 'A Spanish confederal solution can fully satisfy all of the nationalist demands of Catalonia'.<sup>3</sup> This was echoed by other leading cultural and political figures including Jordi Pujol, Jaume Vicens Vives and others. For the historian Vicens Vives, who moved from early support of the regime to alliance with Catalanists, 'it was not possible to govern . . . against a Catalonia that was to be a pioneer in the task of reorganising the Spanish state'.<sup>4</sup> Equally, the newly organised business-led organisation of the 1960s, the *Cercle d'Economia* (Economic Circle) declared in 1968 that 'Catalonia had to continue in Spain its leading role of Castile'.<sup>5</sup> Thus independence did not figure for liberals and conservatives, in a context where Catalan language, culture, its political parties and entities of civil society were persecuted. The position of Catalonia within Spain was transformed by economic modernisation during the Franco regime, and by the development that took place in the Spanish economy as a whole. Catalonia could no longer feel uniquely bourgeois, culturally sophisticated and industrialised, in contrast with a 'semi-feudal' Spain. The modernisation of the Spanish state, particularly from the 1960s, had great implications for the future trajectory of the political and cultural movement of Catalanism.

Within the trajectory of Catalan nationalism, a sector seeking independence has been a late development.<sup>6</sup> This requires some explanation. The organised Catalan labour movement until the late 1930s was unique in Europe due to its dominance by anarcho-syndicalism, which unlike Leninist Marxism, never sought to create an ideology sympathetic to nationalism. A pro-independence strand was unable to obtain either the support of the labour movement or of bourgeois sectors. The pro-independence sector that existed was fragmented and weak, and this continued to be so into the 1930s. Under the Franco regime, the only real force of independence was that represented by the *Front Nacional de Catalunya* (National Front of Catalonia, FNC), which was created in 1940. Whilst influential amongst the Catalan exile community, it had little real impact in Catalonia. In 1969, younger members left the Front and founded the *Partit Socialista d'Alliberament Nacional* (Socialist Party for National Liberation), PSAN, partly inspired by the Basques and the Irish

struggle and in a context of radical leftism. This gave to pro-independence nationalism a strong association with the radical left.<sup>7</sup> Significantly this was the only pro-independence tendency in the Catalan political sphere. It had some intellectual influence but no electoral impact during the transition in the 1970s. In contrast to both the Basque Country and Galicia, the Catalan nationalist movement, whether radical or mainstream, was unable to construct a nationalist-led trades union sector. Into the transition and the 1980s, left radical independence was marked by factionalism, fragmentation, and sectarianism, with intense ideological dispute, particularly over sub-variants of Marxism.

The results of the elections of June 1977 in Catalonia demonstrated that the left in Catalonia was, after Andalusia, apparently the strongest in Spain. Yet one of the key political forces to experience defeat was that of the Catalan nationalist left. This defeat was testimony to the weakness of pro-independence sentiment. In the elections to the first Catalan parliament in 1980, not one openly pro-independence candidate was elected. The military coup attempt in Spain of February 1981 led indirectly to the promulgation of the LOAPA by the two principal state-wide Spanish parties. This prompted the first large-scale expression of Catalan civil society under democracy when the call led by the *Crida* organised a nationalist demonstration of over 150,000 in Barcelona in March 1982.<sup>8</sup> The *Crida*, whilst marginal, left an important legacy. It was the first important civil society campaigning entity under democracy and the first real movement of sociological independence.<sup>9</sup> One of its leading activists, Àngel Colom, subsequently became party leader of *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* and was key in its adoption of Catalan independence as official party policy in 1989. It was also in 1989, inspired by the Baltic declarations of independence from the Soviet Union, that the Catalan parliament passed a motion supporting the right of Catalan self-determination.

Following this change by ERC, from the mid 1990s, a party in the Catalan parliament advocated and supported independence.<sup>10</sup> This change was facilitated by deeper structural changes internationally. Over the 1990s, leftist ideology was subject to reconfiguration. The fall of the Berlin wall and end of orthodox communism and state socialism represented a gradual de-coupling of the independence brand's association with the revolutionary left. The movement's normalisation is closely linked to its separation from Marxism-Leninism. For much of the 1980s it had been marginal and extra-parliamentary. Some of the movement entered ERC, bringing with them a focus on activism that became a source of conflict within the party.<sup>11</sup> The party leadership sought for ERC to become a party of government, as it had been in the 1930s. This was finally achieved in 2003 with the constitution of the three-party coalition government, the *tripartit*, between ERC, the socialists and post-communists. ERC experienced a rapid rise in support which culminated in big shift towards the party in the 2003 and 2004 elections. During this initial phase, young and new voters were energised by the arrival in government of a party committed to Catalan independence. Thus, independence increasingly entered mainstream political discourse.

There has been a continued history of fragmentation and factionalism in



the radical nationalist movement. Soon after its apparent triumphs of 2003 and 2004, *Esquerra Republicana* suffered a repeated erosion of support. ERC experienced splits in 2008 and 2009, and saw former party leaders abandon the party. By 2011, following the Spanish local elections of May, ERC had reverted to the position it held since the early 1990s. Part of the cause for this erosion of support and factionalism was over party strategy. ERC did not wish to be a party solely associated with independence but also wished to be progressive party. However, as it was the sole party in favour of independence with parliamentary representation, it received between a quarter and a third of its supporters from centre-right nationalists. These sectors were alienated by the progressive pretensions of the party and its reluctance to ally with the mainstream force of Catalan nationalism, *Convergència i Unió*. It was this centre-right sector that led the splits from ERC. The constant erosion of ERC and the deep divisions within the pro-independence sector meant that by the spring of 2011, five parties competed on a pro-independence platform. The result was increasing disillusion, particularly amongst new voters, who had been mobilised by the rapid rise of a pro-independence ERC in 2003 to 2004.

Catalan industrial dominance in Spain lasted from the mid nineteenth to the late twentieth century. Catalonia contributes 18.5 per cent of Spanish GDP and produces 26 per cent of Spanish industrial production. The territory once termed the Manchester of the South, has seen its once enormous industrial strength and comparative weight in Spain eroded. Whilst Catalonia has continued to retain economic power, this has not been transferred to political influence in Madrid.<sup>12</sup> The decade 1999 to 2009 was marked by little industrial growth in Catalonia, whilst other areas of Spain boomed. A growing dissatisfaction with the economic exchange with Spain has emerged and become central to the Catalan political narrative, a reflection of the fact that 'charges of discriminatory redistribution abound in actual secessionist movements'.<sup>13</sup> The notion of *espoli fiscal* (financial plundering) echoes the politics of grievance of both the *Lega Nord* and the Flemish nationalists. Between 8 and 10 per cent of Catalan GDP goes to Spain and is not returned. The notion of economic discrimination against Catalonia increasingly became part of political discourse from the mid 1990s.<sup>14</sup> By the late 2000s, a position of fiscal sovereignty attracted ever wider support. This latter element has been pivotal in the shifting of support of middle-class sectors, which have traditionally felt most represented by a pragmatic Catalanism. Spanish perceptions of Catalonia became more negative over a supposed lack of solidarity with the poorer regions of Spain.<sup>15</sup> A further highly significant structural change is that 1997 was the last year that Catalonia sent 50 per cent of its exports to the Spanish market. In every year since, exports to Spain have fallen and are currently around 35 per cent.<sup>16</sup> There is an increasing interdependency of the Catalan economy with the EU and a concomitant reduction of dependency on the Spanish market. Thus the economic ties between Catalonia and Spain have weakened in the past 15 years.

Historically Barcelona and Madrid represented two different political cultures. Beginning under the Franco regime and continuing into the demo-

cratic era, there has been a remarkable transformation in the political economy, role and position of the Spanish capital, Madrid. The view of the city, prevailing from the mid nineteenth to mid twentieth century, as the home to the civil service and agricultural elites dominating industrial Barcelona is no more. Madrid as an economic capital of Spain was built up by Francoism and by the late 1960s became the principal industrial area of the state. The comparative position of Barcelona was being eroded by the early 1970s.<sup>17</sup> 49 per cent of Spanish industry was then concentrated in Catalonia, in contrast to a total in Madrid of only 12 per cent.<sup>18</sup> Post-Franco Madrid grew in cultural, political and economic importance. Multinationals increasingly choose Madrid as the centre of their operations. The Bank of Spain has never had a Catalan chair or influence, in spite of Catalonia's industrial and service weight, whilst the political fallout of the post-2008 financial crisis put 'additional strain on Spain's decentralised governmental structures'.<sup>19</sup> The petit bourgeois sector of the Catalan economy has been particularly hard hit, with over 14,000 small and medium sized businesses closing in 2009 alone.<sup>20</sup> It has been noted that the financial question related to the Spanish autonomous communities has been 'the most vulnerable point of Spain's political stability'.<sup>21</sup> It was notable that in August 2011, Spain's two principal parties, the *Partido Popular* and the PSOE, agreed to amend Spain's constitution to take greater control of autonomous governmental finance. Subsequent moves of the conservative Spanish government led by Mariano Rajoy focussed on a recentralisation of fiscal control to attempt to deal with Spain's economic crisis.

The mid 2000s were marked by autonomous communities in Spain modernising the Statutes of Autonomy established by the constitutional settlement of the late 1970s. With the relative decline of the Catalan economy, it was seen as a particularly urgent measure by the political class. This modernisation provoked great controversy at a Spanish level only in the case of Catalonia. The *Estatut* passed in both the Catalan and Spanish parliaments was deemed unconstitutional by the *Partido Popular*, the PP. This opposition led to the PP, calling on Spain's Supreme Court, the *Tribunal Constitucional*, to assess its constitutional legality. The *Tribunal* was unable to reach a decision on the text until June 2010, taking almost four years. This impasse contributed to popular dissatisfaction with the major political parties who were unable to deliver on a core platform. This greatly contributed to the erosion of the 'hegemonic autonomist mentality'.<sup>22</sup> The negative decision by the Court produced the greatest political protest of Catalanism since 1977, when on 10 July 2010, over one million people protested behind the slogan, 'We are a nation. We decide'. The Court not only struck down key elements of Catalan autonomy but also referred eight times in its judgement to the 'indissoluble unity of Spain'. This gave a great impetus to the movement for Catalan independence, with one survey soon after showing majority support for separation from Spain for the first time ever.<sup>23</sup> The decision by the Court seemed a demonstration of the upper limits of the federal possibilities within modern Spain. The judgement will have long-lasting implications as it poses a particular challenge for the supporters of autonomy and continued Catalan participation in the modern



Spanish state. The *Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* was the political force most damaged by the decision of the Spanish Supreme Court over the *Estatut*. This key measure had been central to PSC strategy to stabilise Spanish–Catalan relations.

The decision of the Spanish Supreme Court revealed a high degree of political disenchantment, both with Spain and with the Catalan political class. The *Estatut* had received 80 per cent support in the Catalan parliament and 70 per cent approval by referendum. The political initiative was taken by entities beyond the party political sphere. Cultural, language and quasi political associations were united in a 'common purpose'.<sup>24</sup> Civil society had been a key element of the transition, but much of both its energy and personnel had been incorporated in the nationalist government that ruled 1980–2003. However, this changed on 18 February 2006, the moment that expressed the return to protagonism of civil society. This first expression of popular mobilisation brought 200,000 onto the streets, led by an organisation called *Plataforma pel Dret de Decidir* (Platform for the Right to Decide). This was followed by 1 December 2007, with over 700,000 protesting over the failures of Catalan infrastructure, which linked economic grievance with pro-independence sentiment. The political parties followed rather than lead these initiatives, a pattern that was repeated in the years following.

The Spanish government only permits autonomous governments to hold referendums that have been approved by two-thirds support in the *Cortes* in Madrid. Those that have taken place in Catalonia have no legal validity. At the same time they are not illegal. The Spanish Referendum law of 1980 allowed for referendum holding at a local level. Thus the mechanism adopted in Catalonia for these referendums has been through the organisation of *consultes populars* (popular votes), using a legal loophole that permitted privately constituted entities to organise votes of this kind.<sup>25</sup> The mobilisation of voters and high media interest further expressed the normalisation of pro-independence sentiment that had been marginal and extra-parliamentary for decades. The highest support for independence has been found in those areas of inland Catalonia with the strong levels of support for the nationalists, whether moderate CiU or more radical, ERC, and others. The lowest levels of participation and support are found in the industrial areas surrounding Barcelona, where in some cases the local council refused to give its support to the organisation of the vote. This latter area is home to both first and second generation Spanish migration as well as the new immigration from overseas that has been arriving since the mid 1990s. Broadly, there has been more support amongst the young, and support has been consistently growing amongst those aged 25 to 50. This is the sector of Catalan society that has been most visible in both the campaigning and street-led protests.<sup>26</sup> Figures expressing support for independence that hover between 25 per cent and 45 per cent are an unprecedented phenomenon.<sup>27</sup> Through this process, independence has become a clear and present part of the political landscape in a way it has never been before.

Catalonia has the largest number of immigrants of any autonomous community in Spain. Its population of 7.5 million now includes 15.9 per cent

foreigners. In 1979 there was little or no immigration in Catalonia. Furthermore, there is a low birth rate amongst native Catalans. Children of those who identify themselves as nationalists are tending to be more radically nationalist than their parents, who grew up in late Francoism and the transition, at a time of political optimism and democratic consensus. Voters under 40 have been socialised in a nationalist context, through schooling, a Catalan language mass media and so on. Certainly, for those who attended school from the mid 1980s onwards, receiving a Catalan-centred education has contributed to the emerging movement of independence. There has been a slow Catalanisation of society. Whilst 31 per cent in 1989 described themselves as solely Catalan or more Catalan than Spanish, this had risen to 35 per cent in 2008; 40 per cent held dual/shared identity. Whilst those who felt solely Spanish or more Spanish than Catalan in 1989 had a figure of 16 per cent, this had fallen by 2008 to 6 per cent. Those who arrived as part of the immigration of the 1950s are declining in number and influence and familial bonds to other areas of Spain are weakening.

There are a number of international variables to consider in any overall assessment of the Catalan independence movement. What is most striking is that it lacks any external patron. There is no international lobby, no diaspora community that is prepared to promote it or interested in Catalan independence. In international law, secession is not a right, it is a matter of the recognition of secession.<sup>28</sup> There is no reason why any current or emergent great power would have any reason at all to promote a possible break up of Spain. Recognition for secession has been explicitly excluded in Spain through the ruling of the Constitutional Court of September 2008 which stated that the only demos in Spain is the Spanish nation. Of 75 countries that have recognised Kosovo including all of the major powers of western Europe, only Spain refused to do so arguing that the independence of Kosovo does not recognise international law. In January 2012 it became public that the conservative Spanish government would not recognise an independent Scotland. These geopolitical pronouncements can only be understood within the context of Spain's Basque and now Catalan secessionist issues.

The great paradox of the period 2006 to 2011 was unprecedented activism and mobilisation for independence, yet this has not translated into party political support for it. The political strength of Catalan independence is indicative of an immature political movement. There is more 'sociological independence' than that expressed by support for political parties. Support for Catalan independence is no longer coterminous with support for ERC in a way that it was in 2003–2004. The new independence increasingly encompasses the centre-right, in a combination of economic grievances and traditional identity elements. There is a highly effective civil society mobilising for independence, with an important component of intellectual sectors, never before seen, even during the transition in the mid 1970s. Independence is now rooted in sectors of the left and of the right, and it is found amongst previous supporters of the existing Spanish constitutional order. However in the elections for the Catalan parliament of November 2010, those who explicitly support independence fell



from 21 to 14 seats. The pro-independence parties were unable to form a unified ticket for the Spanish general election of November 2011. The failure of independence to break through electorally is not surprising given it represents such a dramatic break with historic Catalanism. Its political leadership is marked by varying manifestations of populism and an inexperienced leadership. The Catalan elections of 2010, the Spanish local elections of May 2011 and the general election of 2011 were not for most people about independence. They also took place at a time of popular dissatisfaction with political parties. Thus there is a fragmented political independence movement at the time of the greatest ever support and mobilisation of civil society. *Convergència i Unió's* monopoly of Catalanism has come to an end. Furthermore, the larger of the two parties that make up the coalition, CDC, has experienced an increasing factionalism. The younger generation within the party has become increasingly attracted to the discourse of sovereignty, whilst the older generation remains wedded to traditional Catalanism and nationalism. CiU then is increasingly faced with divergent ideological forces within it, as independence becomes ever more important. Significantly, whilst the political parties were unable to even agree on the slogan for the nationalist demonstration of July 2010, the initiative was taken by civic society, led by the cultural nationalist organisation *Omnium Cultural*.

Catalanism under the conditions of the Franco regime was a movement concerned with the protection and survival of a threatened cultural identity. In spite of the Catalan revival of the 1960s, Catalanism sought, in general terms, the restoration of the position existing in 1939. It was only after some 20 years of nationalist rebuilding that flaws in this strategy became apparent. Its mobilising capacity of 2006 and 2007 and since 2009 has consolidated independence as a serious political option in the collective imagination of the Catalans. Independence has become politically respectable, but it has no clear leadership and is lacking in both sophisticated programme and doctrine. It would be more accurate to describe it in the 'aspirational phase' of secessionism. Catalanism, the movement that historically has been broader than nationalism, has the widest social support than any other time in the country's history. What remains unresolved is the exact and final form this Catalanism will take in the twenty-first century, and whether it will culminate in Catalonia attaining the attributes of its own state and separation from Spain. Whilst national reconstruction has been determined by the impact of Francoism, Catalan society has not yet given a settled view to its ultimate character.